



EPAP EXPANDED PROFESSIONAL
ASSOCIATES PROGRAM

Announcing the Spring 2015 Open Season for Application for Qualification to the Expanded Professional Associates Program (EPAP)

1. SUMMARY: The Department is pleased to announce the Spring 2015 Open Season for application for qualification to the Expanded Professional Associates Program (EPAP), beginning April 3. This cable provides detailed information on the program application process and helpful resources to assist with application preparation. Due to tremendous interest in EPAP from family members of all agencies, the number of applicants grows substantially each year. **All eligible family members interested in participating in EPAP are encouraged to apply for qualification to the program during the upcoming open season.**

2. PROGRAM OVERVIEW: EPAP provides U.S. citizen eligible family members serving overseas 200 professional-level Foreign Service full-time positions, in Economics, Management, Political, Public Diplomacy, Financial Management, General Services, Human Resources, Office Management or Medical (physician or nurse) areas. It also provides up to an additional 50 positions in the Information Management (IM) area. The pay grades run from FP-07 to FP-04.

Posts identify which positions they would like filled via EPAP and request all positions through their respective Regional Bureau. Regional Bureaus submit IM positions to the Bureau of Information Resource Management (IRM) for final approval. Each regional bureau is authorized a number of EPAP positions as determined by the Under Secretary for Management, and the regional bureaus each make the final decision on which positions to fill within their allotment. IRM makes the final decision on which IM positions to fill in each region.

In order to apply for any advertised positions, candidates must already be qualified in the advertised area. HR/FLO conducts two EPAP qualification open seasons each year. **The next open season will be April 3 – 17, 2015.**

3. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS: In order to participate in EPAP, an applicant must be an Eligible Family Member (EFM) who:

- Is at least 21 years old;
- Is a U.S. citizen spouse or U.S. citizen same-sex domestic partner, listed by name on the assignment notification/cable or approved Form OF-126 (Foreign Service Residence and Dependency Report) of a direct-hire (not contract) Foreign Service or Civil Service employee of any federal agency, or uniformed services member who is currently serving(or will be serving) in a full-time position overseas at a U.S. mission or at an office of the American Institute in Taiwan under Chief of Mission authority; and
- Resides at the sponsoring employee's post of assignment abroad at a U.S. mission, or, as appropriate, at an office of the American Institute in Taiwan.

Same-Sex Domestic Partners must comply with the provisions of 3 FAM 1612, including the filing of the Affidavit of Eligibility for Benefits and Obligations (DS 7669).

4. PROGRAM PROCESS:

Step 1: Eligible family members submit an application for qualification to the program via www.usajobs.gov during one of the open seasons held twice a year. See details below in paragraphs 7-9. The vacancy announcement will be open for two weeks. Family members are encouraged to prepare their application materials in advance.

Step 2: HR/FLO reviews applications to confirm eligibility and convenes Qualification Evaluation Panels (QEPs) of Subject Matter Experts to review applications submitted by eligible candidates. The QEPs evaluate each candidate as either qualified or not qualified for the area(s) to which they applied. This process can take up to 2 ½ months to complete depending on how many applications are received.

Step 3: HR/FLO notifies EFMs of the QEP determinations and shares the results with the Regional Bureaus.

Step 4: The Regional Bureaus create a list of available positions which HR/FLO advertises. This recruitment will take place at least once a year, but, depending on available positions, may take place twice a year. If posts have

available unfilled positions between open seasons/recruitment cycles, they may advertise those at the post level.

Step 5: Positions are advertised for two weeks and family members send their required documents directly to the Regional Bureau EPAP Representative.

Step 6: The Regional Bureau EPAP Representative confirms whether candidates are EPAP-qualified and determines which advertised positions can be filled. The bureau forwards the list of candidates to the respective posts to conduct any required language testing and schedule interviews.

Step 7: Posts interview qualified applicants and recommend the selected candidate to the bureau.

Step 8: The Regional Bureau makes the final hiring and salary decisions and offers the position to the selected family member.

Step 9: Once an EFM has accepted an offer, post will initiate any required security clearance process. When at least an interim clearance has been granted, the bureau will send the authorization to hire cable to post and the selected family member may begin work.

5. PREVIOUSLY QUALIFIED APPLICANTS: Individuals who applied in any previous EPAP open season and were found eligible by the QEPs in one or more of the EPAP areas, **DO NOT NEED** to re-apply for qualification in those previously qualified areas. **Qualifications are good for the duration of the program as long as a candidate remains an eligible family member.**

6. APPLICANTS SEEKING ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS: Individuals who were qualified in any previous EPAP open season and wish to request qualification in ADDITIONAL AREAS or who applied previously and were not found eligible, and have additional work or educational experience that would support their request, and who wish to be re-evaluated in an area in which they were not previously qualified, **must submit a new application this open season.**

7. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS: Applicants will respond to a vacancy announcement beginning April 3 and submit their application, including required documents (see below) via www.usajobs.gov

In advance of April 3, prospective candidates should take the following steps:

A. Carefully review the Qualification Standards posted online: www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c41174.htm. These detail the requirements for qualification in each EPAP area. Note for 2015, there are substantive changes in the Information Management area; the other standards remain the same.

B. Create or update a USAJOBS resume. First create an account and register at www.usajobs.gov and then create an online resume. Be sure to include all relevant work experience you wish to be considered. *Any experience not included will not be considered by the QEP or the Regional Bureau. This is the only type of resume that can be submitted with an application.*

8. REQUIRED DOCUMENTS:

A. A copy of the sponsoring employee's assignment cable/notification or *approved form* OF-126 listing the applicant by name as a dependent, the sponsoring agency and current or upcoming post of assignment.

This information is essential to confirm eligibility for the program; without it, the application will not be forwarded to the Qualification Evaluation Panel (QEP) for consideration.

If a prospective applicant's sponsoring employee's agency does not provide all the required information in a single document or if you have concerns about whether the document is adequate, contact the EPAP Coordinator at FLOaskEPAP@state.gov to discuss options immediately.

B. U.S. college/university transcripts. These must be legible, include the applicant's name and indicate the degree(s) (if any) awarded and course work completed. Note: these do not have to be official transcripts; unofficial copies of school records are acceptable, as long as they meet the above requirements.

If the transcripts do not include the degree(s) awarded, include a copy of the diploma with the transcripts.

If the transcripts are from a U.S. institution, but they are not in English, applicants must submit the original transcript and a certified, English translation.

Create a single document of all of educational records (i.e., scan them all together into a single document).

Foreign Education Provision: In lieu of transcripts, applicants with education acquired outside of any state of the U.S., the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, a Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, or any territory or possession of the U.S.) must submit an evaluation completed by a credential evaluation service recognized by the U.S. Department of Education in order to be reviewed towards qualification.

The QEP cannot consider any foreign education credentials that have not been evaluated.

Applicants can request an evaluation (most organizations charge a fee for this service) from a member organization of one of the two national associations of credential evaluation services:

National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) is an association of 19 credential evaluation services with admission standards and an enforced code of good practice. www.naces.org

Association of International Credentials Evaluators (AICE) is an association of 10 credential evaluation services with a board of advisors and an enforced code of ethics. www.aice-eval.org

Credential evaluations are not free and applicants are responsible for the cost of the selected service. The cost will vary according to the complexity of the case and the amount of documentation you can provide. Prior to submitting any documents to a credential evaluation service, you will also need to obtain English translations of any non-English documents, preferably notarized.

C. Individuals claiming veteran's preference and/or with an IT-related Military Occupational Specialty and requesting qualification in the Information Management area must submit a copy of their DD-214 with their application; this is required of those who are preference eligible.

D. Former or current (on LWOP) U.S. Department of State Information Management Specialists requesting qualification in the Information Management area must include a SF-50 verifying their prior service.

E. Medical professionals must include a copy of their current U.S. medical license with their online applications.

9. APPLICATION PROCESS: Once the vacancy announcement is posted on www.usajobs.gov individuals begin the process by clicking the *Apply Online* button on the vacancy announcement. They will be directed to the Gateway to State site where they will respond to several sets of questions. The first will ask about their current or past federal employment. The second confirms their eligibility for the program and allows them to indicate in which areas they are requesting qualification. Applicants may select as many areas for qualification in which they are interested.

In order to apply for any positions that will be advertised, candidates must be qualified in the advertised area. For example, for a position in Human Resources, candidates must have been previously qualified in EPAP in Human Resources. Qualification in Management does not cover an EPAP position in Human Resources or any other area.

Applicants will attach their USAJOBS resume and upload the required documents to complete and submit their application. It is the responsibility of the applicant to verify the required documents have been successfully attached to the application prior to the closing date. This process closely approximates the application process for Foreign Service Specialists and most federal employment.

Applicants should allow at least three to four hours to complete their application package and are encouraged not to wait until the deadline to submit their applications. Individuals must meet all the qualification requirements and submit all required supporting documentation by the closing date of the vacancy announcement.

The application deadline is 11:59 p.m. eastern daylight time Friday, April 17, 2015. No submissions will be accepted after the deadline.

10. OTHER RESOURCES: FLO's EPAP Coordinator has created several resources with helpful information to complete an application. These are available online at: www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c41174.htm and include a *Checklist: How to prepare now for the next open season* and a *Tip Sheet* with suggestions, including technical trouble-shooting advice for preparing applications to EPAP. Last fall, FLO conducted a global webinar on the program. Some requirements have changed since the webinar, but the basic information on the application process remains the same. The webinar may be viewed at: <https://deptofstatehr.adobeconnect.com/p6gl0ja0aqh>

All prospective applicants are advised to review the documents and webinar before completing their applications.

11. NEXT STEPS: Once the application period ends, HR/FLO will continue with the process defined in paragraph 4. **HR/FLO hopes to provide notification by mid-June 2015.**

Qualifications are good for the duration of the program as long as a candidate remains an eligible family member. Although qualification for an area does not guarantee an offer of employment, family members are encouraged to seek qualification during this open season in order to be eligible to apply for any future positions.

All EPAP related information is available at: www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c41174.htm or contact the EPAP Coordinator at FLOaskEPAP@state.gov.